The COMMONWEAL

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INNER FORUM 94

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After the Greek Campaign

THE GERMANS announce the loss of some eleven hundred officers and men; the British list their casualties at some three thousand; the Germans claim nine thousand prisoners. This, officially and perhaps in fact, is the cost of the Greek campaign. It is small—surprisingly so—because the only factor common to the armies engaged was their proven courage, and one had feared and expected that it would result in stubborn and appalling sacrifice. There was such an evocation, too, of disaster in the names we read in the papers: Thermopylae, "Dunkirk." Yet two more countries have been brought into the zone of silence, joining silent Poland and silent Norway and silent Czechoslovakia, and it has cost the German armies very little to close the prison doors. How did this come about?

It resulted from the fact that the Germans are applying once again—after the last war which was one of attrition—the swift, conclusive tactics of the war of movement. They have mechanized the strategy of mobility employed by our Stonewall Jackson, our Sherman, our Jeb Stuart, and by doing so they have been able to secure similarly definite local results. What has changed is that now their planes and tanks permit action irrespective of terrain, regardless of any static opposition, and that "local" results now mean the conquest of entire countries. For years we thought the war of 1914-1918—since we are moderns and it was contemporary—would provide a prototype for subsequent warfare. This proved to be profoundly untrue for, in reality, that war was only a reversion to a time when warfare was not intelligently conducted. For that reason it was—at unendurable length—a massacre. Foch and Ludendorf were intellectuals, but once the war of movement had failed, with von Kluck and the battle of the Marne, they found no way of breaking the equilibrium of forces save by exhausting the opponent. But modern weapons, which then were in a stage of early development, now are integrated and the intellect has come into its rights again. War once more is subject to the rules of the art which governs it, subject, also, to the will and decision of the men who know those rules. One fortunate effect—and it is a relief to be able to use the word fortunate somewhere in connection with war—is that wastage of human life is lessened when an army is artfully led and mechanically supplied.

"What Are We Going to Do About It?"

PM, five cent tabloid newspaper of New York, very "advanced," highly interventionist, a "liberal" paper with a staff well stocked with ex-fellow-travelers and with many who have been called widely and without adequate denial ex-communists, on May 1 published as a big feature "Thirteen pages of straight talk about the Catholic Church and the Fascist Question." A disarming editorial introduction to the pictures and texts states that "most of those who assembled the material for this section are Catholics. . . . their equipment was a deep respect for the principles of the church and a sense of outrage at the indignities to which Fascism has submitted it." Encyclicals are quoted, news summaries of persecution, including the Polish report of Cardinal Lhond, are printed, photographs of nazi and fascist war and peace operations given, pages are devoted to the opinions of American Catholics.

Catholics ought to be grateful to *PM* for spiking so vigorously the propaganda widespread in "ex-popular front" circles which identifies the Church with fascism. ("Fascism" is used as a general term for the type of totalitarianism which includes both the Italian and German systems; other examples are not mentioned, if there are meant to be any.) For many years THE COMMONWEAL has labored at the task of displaying the antithetical nature of Catholicism and nazi-fascism, and no group has been more stubbornly determined to deny our thesis than the fellow-traveling, the quasi-Marxian, and the crudely "leftist." Every politically aware Catholic in America, and we are sure in France and other foreign countries similarly, has been baited for practically a decade by self-avowed anti-Fascists (preeminently by communists, before the switch),

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who kept up a constant stream of loud libel and misinterpretation against the Church, insisting in the face of truth that it is "fascist." That libel is by no means dead yet, particularly in the circles whose thinking *PM* may be supposed usually to represent.

In the introduction to its little essay, *PM* asks: "What are we going to do about it?" That is the rub of the whole article. It requires no advanced degree of skepticism to believe that *PM* did not print this story simply in order to right an historic wrong, only to give testimony to truth, to be decent to Catholics. *PM* is dominated by its political policy, which is American interventionism. The unstated refrain of all the evidence cited throughout the thirteen pages is that Catholic condemnation of fascism is identical with support of *PM's* war policy.

This we deny absolutely.

On the one hand, *PM* rightly quotes Lt. Commdr. Maurice S. Sheehy, U.S.N.—Father Sheehy of Catholic University—as a passionate and sincere advocate of a policy leading to the US hurling all its forces against the foe. On the other hand, more than one whom *PM* correctly quotes as detesting fascism are also publicly known to oppose US entry into the war. It is certain that American bishops, priests and lay people differ in their opinion about whether the US should join the war or not. On a world-wide basis there is, of course, terrific difference on this subject among the Catholic hierarchy, clergy and laity. The Catholic Church is not identified nor associated with an American policy of intervention or of non-intervention.

THE COMMONWEAL asserts and gives witness to the fact that condemnation of nazi-fascism by Catholics is not to be identified with a policy of US war. Throughout, this magazine makes the condemnation. Some of the staff and contributing editors also believe, and have so stated their beliefs in these pages (*PM* found several of them), that the US must be ready and willing and even eager to join the war in order to oppose nazi-fascism. Other of the contributing editors, and THE COMMONWEAL's co-editors, condemning nazi-fascism no less than any of their colleagues, oppose American entry into the war as a means to fight that evil. *PM* makes a crude over-simplification; it overlooks what is really difficult.

Nation Confused and Divided

OBVIOUSLY the most threatening difficulty for America is not our people's differences on the virtues of nazism—only a minute section approves or condones Hitler. But the debate on what to do won't be downed. The side for full intervention has the greater number of vocal adherents and at the moment its advocates focus on convoying and "naval belligerency" as a means of assuring delivery in Britain of the aggregate of American armament that will pound Germany into submission. Regardless of the evidence whether this program is feasible from a military point of view, the public has doubts on other grounds. If the President had from the start taken the electorate somewhat into his confidence in these matters, we would be more ready to believe that the war situation is really quite as simple as this. As it is, the suspicion remains that more extensive operations than assured delivery of American armaments are in view. Senator Pepper of Florida went considerably beyond the line at present taken by administration spokesmen and supporters when he advocated in the Senate immediate joint American-British occupation of Greenland, Iceland, the Azores, the Cape Verde and Canary Islands and Dakar, simultaneously with the bombing of Tokyo by an American-manned squadron attached to the Chinese forces. It is disquieting to have so foolhardy a proposal broached in the American Senate, whether it is a case of Southern belligerency or an administration-inspired trial balloon. How can one seriously suppose that by taking such steps against the whole Axis world, and several neutral countries besides, only a few American lives would be sacrificed and a much larger number of lives would be saved as a result? Perhaps Senator Pepper is responding to the increasing chorus of "fight, fight, fight." In any case, the American people will be more surely enlisted in the anti-Hitler cause if in the future such misleading terms as "aid short-of-war," "lend-lease," "coast patrols" are supplanted by their true equivalents. How can confusion be avoided when a thing like "lend-lease" means in some minds a defensive step to avoid war, and in others an entering wedge, the first step down the grade past coast patrols, convoys, naval fighting, air raiding and everything else useful to land this nation with the whole world in unprecedented, all-out war. The strenuous agitation about convoying itself tends increasingly to weaken public confidence. Admiral Land's report of the 8 vessels sunk out of the 205 carrying export licenses and clearing for the United Kingdom the past 4 months simply does not square with the repeated claim that a large proportion of American aid to Britain is being sunk.

The Food Situation in Europe

AMID so much uncertainty, there is one increasing certainty as the months slip by, that we all would joyfully be without. The food situation in a great part of Europe is steadily worse. In the nature of things we cannot receive more than fragmentary reports from any land; but these reports, however casual or incomplete, all testify to the same thing. The vice chairman of the European Executive Council of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, returning after

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a year of relief work on the continent, describes widespread and acute food shortage, with actual starvation in Poland and Spain; in the latter country he found children of fourteen sometimes wizened by hunger to the size of seven-year-olds. The day following this interview the newspapers reported that 36 food ships had been passed by the British blockade for Spain. At almost the same time, however, the navicerts for the mainland of Greece, now regarded as enemy territory, were revoked, and the lack of food there is already critical. Densely populated little Belgium, to which food imports are life-blood, was at the borderline of starvation weeks ago. And in no other country disorganized by invasion and deprived by blockade of the food from outside on which it is always in part dependent, are conditions anything but worsening. Again we ask that the experimental feeding plan of the Committee on Food for the Small Democracies be tried. It makes the most careful provisions for supervision and against abuse. If found wanting, it would be automatically discontinued. If approved, it would save us from the odium of letting these people starve when we have plenty. In the post-war world there will be practical reasons also in favor of our acting humanely. William Philip Simms, in the *World-Telegram*, has begun to trace the anti-democratic campaign carried on by the conquerors among those whose hunger they now and then alleviate. Belgium, it is said, may be able to buy a limited amount of meats and fats from the Soviet. This is not the way for us to lay the foundation of an anti-totalitarian future.

Jones vs. Morgan

AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT—and significant—development in finance is the announcement by Jesse Jones of the RFC that his agency will participate in bidding for new bond issues when private investment bankers are "unable to handle them easily." What seems to have happened is, briefly, this. Columbia Gas and Electric Corporation, a great utilities holding company, has been trying to refinance its bonded indebtedness. Its plan is to issue $120,000,000 in new bonds wherewith to retire other obligations now committed to higher interest rates. Morgan, Stanley have asked the SEC to allow them to head a syndicate which will market their bonds, and claim the issue is so large as to preclude competitive bidding; the country's banking system, they claim, couldn't form more than one syndicate able or willing to underwrite so large a sum. The SEC insists, however, that there must be competitive bidding, and its good friend Mr. Jones steps into the breach to supply that competition. This may merely be a maneuvre to prevent Morgan, Stanley's making what the New Deal would consider an excessive profit, or it may mean in practice if not in intention a big step toward state socialism. But at least it is indicative of the shift in the locus of power since 1929; thus seemingly the only way to get competition in a $120,000,000 financing is by calling in the government. The largest available source of capital today is in Washington, not in Wall Street. That has been obvious for a long time; Mr. Jones's action merely dramatizes it.

Pulitzer Prizes

THE PULITZER award, as an institution which promotes a general critical catharsis each year, is deserving of civic gratitude. It is not only the committee that functions in this beneficial action, nor the handful of the chosen, who usually no longer need the acclaim or the dollars, that are the gainers. The effect spreads far and wide throughout the land. The critical consciousness of our people, bombarded for a year with books, books-of-the-month, book columns, gathers as to a crisis in anticipation of the event; there is excitement, indignation, rejoicing—and, after it all, a sense of finality, an acceptance of truth (or fate), an easing of the pain of opinion and championship till the accumulated writings of another twelve months brings it back once more. The professional critics, of course, give their own performance, in which they are very likely to put the mages of Morningside in their place ahead of time. This year the drama critics gave the wreath of bays to Miss Lillian Hellman for "Watch on the Rhine" just a week before the Pulitzer committee crowned their old favorite Robert Sherwood for "There Shall Be No Night." A group of distinguished literary commentators was equally dissident, preferring Hans Zinsser's "As I Remember Him" to Ola Elizabeth Winslow's "Jonathan Edwards" in biography, Van Wyck Brooks's "New England: Indian Summer" to "The Atlantic Migration" for which Marcus Lee Hansen was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer choice in history, and tying between Conrad Aiken's "And in the Human Heart" and Alice Duer Miller's "The White Cliffs," as against the Pulitzer choice of Leonard Bacon's long poem, "Sunderland Capture." Well, most of these are stout contenders, and we are not going to insert ourselves between them. The absence of a fiction award was more striking than any positive choice could have been. We presume—though without authority—that Hemingway might have had it with a different locale, or Roberts with a different treatment. The most interesting selection was Westbrook Pegler for the reporting prize, for exposing corruption in labor unions. We have signified before this that we believe Mr. Pegler to have a rather too simplified approach to the whole problem of unions. But we are glad to add our tribute here to his courageous and brilliant work in running labor racketeers to earth.

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Mexican Education—1941

A brief bill of particulars in a hard case.

By **Randall Pond**

THE TITLE of this article is, I admit, too all-embracing for what I have to say on the subject and for the limitations of space. Yet, in this day of shouts for "Latin-American intellectual cooperation," in this hour of trying to extend the benefits of our educational establishments to our southern neighbors, it occurred to me that some Americans might be interested in a rapid glance at the educational situation in Mexico. Being the nearest of Hispanic-American countries and the most closely bound to us by cheap and rapid transportation, Mexico is almost sure to get more attention in the way of scholarships and fellowships, teacher exchanges and student junkets, than any of the other sister republics.

At the outset it should be remembered that popular condemnation of the educational system in Mexico both by natives and foreigners is equalled only by the popular condemnation of the religious persecution which has been carried on intensively for the past fifteen years. The views expressed in the article are taken from long personal observation and study. This is not an attack on the system, nor is it designed to cast aspersions on the thousands of self-sacrificing men and women who have labored and are laboring to give instruction to millions of children in Mexico. At the same time, the general picture is bad, depressing; as I have said more than once, in personal talks with Mexican teachers, we can expect no real or permanent advances in the system until we have first said not just *mea culpa* but *mea maxima culpa* and then set out to reorganize our system from top to bottom.

Visiting teachers and writers who return to the United States all aglow with the spirit of the Rivera and Orozco murals are often tempted to talk about Mexican "democracy" and the great strides being made in education here. The truth of the matter is that education is as tightly bound to the state here as it is in any of the totalitarian countries. With the exception of the National University (which will be considered later) and the illegal religious schools whose studies are not recognized officially anyway, every public and private school in the country is licensed and inspected by the national Department of Education from its headquarters in Mexico City. At the present time, it can be stated without fear of equivocation, that despite the many changes President Avila Camacho has made in numerous government offices, he has done little or nothing to remove from power the band of communists and pseudo-communists who have controlled the country's educational system from 1934 to the present.

The present secretary, Luís Sánchez Pontón, is a lawyer by profession, a politician by preference and apparently an educator by accident. His background is undistinguished as regards teaching, but he did make a trip to Russia and he did write a book some years ago called "Toward the Socialistic School." He has been under constant fire since his appointment and has continually denied charges that the Department is communistic or has leanings in that direction. The subsecretary is Dr. Arreguín, also a comrade of the left. The head of the Department of Secondary Education, José Mancisidor, has never denied his affiliations with the Communist Party and rarely misses the opportunity to speak at its public ceremonies. The least he ever does at party conclaves is take a seat on the platform where he may be seen. The director of the Department of Fine Arts is Javier Icaza, once a writer of fervent poetry in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe, now equally as fervent in his poetic praise of the Russian paradise. To this group may be added an ex-deputy named Pérez H. He is known, derisively, throughout the length and breadth of Mexico, as "the personal enemy of God." This appellation he fixed upon himself in the old fanatical days when Calles still ruled and Garrido Canabal was burning the images of saints and shooting down women and children on their way home from Mass.

Many more names could be added but I believe that those indicated are sufficient to show that we can expect no great change in educational policy so long as these men remain at important posts where they can bring the great weight of their offices to bear against teachers who would oppose them. It is rumored that the new president accepted the educational setup with ill grace, but that he had to yield on this point in order to get in the men he wanted in other departments. Perhaps he will grow strong enough and popular enough in the coming year to resist openly the pressure from leftist groups who were in full control under Cárdenas. It is pleasant to be able to say that

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there are many able men and women who can be called in to reorganize the Department and make it worthy of the time, effort and money which is expended upon it annually.

The system

To turn to the educational system itself, we have something organized on a French model but with so many deficiencies inherited from succeeding administrations that the model is but dimly discernible beneath the overgrowth of courses and subjects. Primary education consists of six years' work; secondary of three; preparatory of two (will be extended to three next year); and most university careers need five years for their completion. The curriculum in the first two fields is arbitrarily set by the Department of Education; the lists of textbooks are made up by it as well; and all teachers in schools which wish to have their credits accepted by the government and eventually by the university must be approved by the department.

Before touching on curriculum and texts, it would be well to observe the actual buildings and teachers which are devoted to the instruction of Mexican children. Schools controlled by the government are in the majority throughout the republic (not in the capital secondaries, however); the second largest group is found in the states themselves and are supported either wholly or in part by the state government, the federal authorities cooperating when necessary; the third group is made up of private institutions, while there is a fourth supported by big industries like mining companies, mills, etc., with which we will not be concerned in this article.

The situation in the capital is interesting from a number of viewpoints. There, alongside the government schools, one finds a multitude of institutions which exist on private capital. Their names often indicate the reason for which they were founded, but that is not always the case. Among the most important of such private schools are the Bancaria y Comercio, Colegio Franco-Español, The American School Foundation, The English School for Boys, Liceo Franco-Méxicano, and the Colegio Aleman. The last named school was cleverly named for the Baron von Humboldt, who wrote so interestingly about Mexico in his "Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain." This German school, recently moved into a large and beautiful new building, is the only foreign school in the country which, to my knowledge, received a subsidy from its government. This subsidy was generally admitted to be in the neighborhood of twenty thousand dollars a year. Nazism was taught along with the government studies.

I am not going to take the time to write extensively on church schools. That would take a long and well-documented article all to itself. Needless to say, such schools continue despite all efforts to close them. At the present time, a dozen of the most important schools in the capital are conducted by priests, brothers and nuns. Certainly this is known to the authorities, but it would seem that the pressing necessity for schools of all types has caused department heads and inspectors to be more lenient than in years past. The very best preparatory school in Mexico City is conducted by the Marist Brothers.

When I refer to the need for schools of all types I have in mind the admission by the Department of Education, made at the opening of the school year in February, that approximately *two million children* throughout the country will be unable to attend school this year for lack of buildings and, probably, teachers. The appropriation for schools in the national budget is a good percentage of the total—approximately eighty million pesos in a budget of something under five hundred million. Yet this large sum is dreadfully insufficient, given the quantity of children in need of teachers and schools. We smile when we remember that the famous (or infamous) Article III of the Constitution states: "The appropriation for education in the national budget will be increased each year until all Mexican children are in government schools." For we remember that education is supposedly "compulsory" here; and we remember, at the same time, that not even the United States attempts to give free education to all its children.

Speaking of curriculum, the best descriptive term is "anarchy." Children in the primary grades are expected to learn *eight* subjects; those in the secondaries, *eleven;* those in the preparatories, *eleven.* This is, of course, annually, so that over a period of six primary years, 48 subjects are presented; in three secondary years, 33; and in two preparatory, 22; a total of 103 subjects in eleven years! Secondary children, ranging in age their first year between 12 and 14, are in the classroom approximately *thirty-five hours a week!* Is it necessary to add that from one-third to one-half fail to complete their studies in three years' time? Is it any wonder that stories of teachers being bribed to pass students, of education department officials receiving similar bribes, are current comment in Mexico? Or that many and many a person does not bother to wade through the system and simply "buys his title," as the popular phrase has it?

Generally speaking, most children stop with the primary certificate; a far smaller percentage (the government schools handle only about 20,000 secondary students in the capital out of a population of 1,250,000) go on to secondary; and an even smaller group survive the preparatory work to enter the university. There are some private preparatory schools affiliated with the university, while that school itself has the largest, the Na-

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tional Preparatory School. The Polytechnical School, affiliated with the government system of secondary technical schools, is supposed to be on a university level, but the older institution apparently snubs it, both in public and in private.

The careers

The three favored careers are the law, medicine and engineering. The latter may be said to substitute for the priesthood which in colonial times was the third popular branch of learning. There has been such crowding in all three professions, such a tendency to concentrate in the capital and a few other large cities of the republic, that both the government and the university have made repeated efforts to get graduates, especially doctors, to spend some time in smaller cities and towns where trained men and women are a rarity, if not altogether nonexistent. It is true that there are other "universities" scattered over the country, but in most cases they are unworthy successors to the pioneer colonial institutions. It is to the National University that one generally looks in matters of college education.

Sad to report, things could hardly be worse than they are in the university. Although not the direct successor to the famed Royal and Pontifical University which first opened its doors in 1553, it is the heir to all the traditions of culture and learning which distinguished the old school for nearly three centuries. Called autonomous, it needs at least two million pesos a year from the government in order to exist. Called national, it is insufficient to take care of the hordes of students who descend on it from the provinces each year. Called a university, it has in recent years been distinguished for disgraceful student riots, overlong vacations, and a failure on the part of many members of the faculty to comply with their duties as teachers and guides of the new generation.

The problems of the university are too long and too complicated to be dealt with here; nor do I pretend to know the answer to these problems. However, things cannot be made better until: first, discipline is established and made the rule, from top to bottom of the institution; two, the financial situation is remedied by the raising of an endowment fund and the proper charging of tuition to help support the school; three, a permanent teaching staff is formed to combat the evils attendant upon a system which allows teachers to take classes they cannot possibly find time to teach, or permits them to ignore their duties to the students by simply failing to go to the class. This last point is tied up with the financial situation, since the majority of university professors, especially those not in executive positions, cannot live on university salaries. They are doctors, lawyers, engineers and teachers in other schools; this is a fair excuse for occasionally not attending classes.

While many primary and secondary teachers are university graduates, a large number are trained in the normal school in the capital and in others located in the states. Both the national and state schools have fine traditions in the history of Mexican education; today, however, conditions have changed and the Normal School in Mexico City has acquired an unenviable reputation for indiscipline, poor teaching and indifferent work.

The matter of textbooks has been the theme for a battle ever since school opened in February. Americans are familiar with the corruption connected with the buying of texts in a number of American communities. It may be said with some assurance that such scandals are of microscopic proportions compared with some of the recent ones here in Mexico. The self-sacrificing communists of the Cárdenas period certainly made more than "hay" while the president's benevolent "sunshine" shone on them for six years. The primary books were poorly written, badly printed and absurdly Marxist. The secondaries had to suffer the imposition of "A Brief History of the World" by that distinguished educator, H. G. Wells. Mexican history was written chiefly by three men, two of them savage Church critics and government apologists, Alfonso Toro and Alfonso Teja Zabre; the third a communist who made no bones about it, Sub-Secretary of Education Luís Chávez Orozco. Language textbooks were almost lost in a welter of politics and intrigue. This was especially true of English texts, since they were in great demand as English acquired an enormous popularity over its old rival, French. Sánchez Pontón was supposed to remove all communist texts; he has not done much as yet.

I know that this picture is going to be called dreary, one-sided, conservative, reactionary, prejudiced, etc. I do not think any of the charges too strong, nor is the picture too black. It would be worse, blacker, more depressing without the scores of religious schools, which labor under cover; without the many fine private schools which do admirable work despite government harassment; without the thousands of humble men and women throughout the country who do the best they can despite a hostile government, inadequate pay, ruinous buildings and insufficient equipment. Some day, and I hope it will be in the near future, Mexican education will begin a long and toilsome climb to the plane it once occupied in Latin America. The Revolution, Marxism, and politics have ruined it, scattered its forces, humiliated it almost beyond endurance. If this article should be quoted in Mexico, should arouse a little indignation there because it comes from the pen of a foreign critic, I shall feel well repaid for my efforts, I shall feel I have done a service to the scores of teachers I know and admire as friends and instructors of the youth of that beautiful country.

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Home Library

A popular center of Christian culture and its beginnings.

By **Edward Skillin, Jr.**

WHY HAD everyone said that I should see Dr. Julia Metcalf and the St. Thomas More Library, I wondered, as I tried to get my bearings amid the tall buildings and strange surroundings of downtown Los Angeles. Ten years is a long interval between visits. The first problem was to find the right corner to take off from. But everyone was so friendly and helpful that it was not long before I found myself on the right safety aisle, directly in front of Bullock's big department store. Across the way stood a branch of the Bank of America and Clifton's Brookdale Cafeteria, open from 6 A.M. to midnight, and "the world's largest."

Finally the Washington car came along, its low-slung cow-catcher thrust forward at an angle that seemed to mean business. It was a solid looking vehicle of street-car orange with silver grey trim and a brown, low-pitched roof. I paid my seven cents and sat back on the hard wooden seat. On the way out there might be some historic missions to see or possibly some other evidences of the leading part the Catholic Church has played in the establishment of the American West. The archdiocese of Los Angeles itself is over 150 years old. Such handsome buildings as the new post office and the remarkable new Union Station, both within a stone's throw of the ancient Church of Our Lady Queen of the Angels from which the city got its name, are modeled directly after the California missions built by the early friars.

The traffic semaphore changed and we started across Seventh Street down Broadway. This section did not differ markedly from similar districts in other large American cities except for the number of parking lots (25c a day, for the most part). At the bottom of the hill, however, we came upon a curious looking building of drab appearance, except for its many domes. It houses Hearst's *Herald-Examiner*, "the great newspaper of the great Southwest."

At this juncture the car turned a sharp right angle and started out Eleventh Street. Here the parking fee dropped to 10c a day. When the car turned left on South Figueroa, we entered the city's automobile row. Instead of the plate glass windows so familiar to the denizens of Columbus Circle many of the dealers had their showrooms open to the street. More numerous than these fresh-air showrooms were auto loan finance companies and second-hand auto lots. At one corner a shiny sedan high on a platform bore a sign in large red letters: "69c a day buys this Pelton Perfected Used Car." But this establishment wasn't in it with the Smiling Irishman's, where the trolley took another right angle turn. The Smiling Irishman, "the workingman's friend," proffers his "selected automobiles" for as little as $20 down with 24 months to pay. He claims to be "the world's largest dealer."

Once we had put the Smiling Irishman behind us, there were the first signs of residences, lawns and palm trees. Anyone who is familiar with the tropics may take California palms in his stride, but they provide such a contrast to Fifth Avenue maples or suburban oaks that provincial Northeasterners do not soon forget them. The squat date palms give somewhat the effect of a giant bowl of dark green ferns, because of the upward and outward swirl of their expressive branches. The royal palms are several times higher and considerably more slender. Above each sturdy gray trunk is a brown patterned sector of clipped branch stubs, above this the shaggy petticoat of dead branches, looking for all the world like an elongated Hawaiian grass skirt. Finally the crown, a comparatively small top-knot of dark green palm branches. Most of these trees tower above the attractive Spanish-type bungalows that comprise so many of the newer residences.

But there were two more special districts to traverse before we reached the real residential section. One of these, morticians' row, affixed neon signs to imposing white establishments patterned after everything from the Spanish mission church to the steep-roofed Renaissance French château. This row was soon followed by several blocks of furniture stores. One of the few remaining obstacle-golf courses and a group of "Airstream Trailers" parked under a few mangy palms fitted in somewhere along the line.

By the time the W trolley had reached South Harvard Boulevard the neighborhood looked decidedly residential. The shops on Washington Boulevard often opened directly on the street. Just off the sidewalk were appetizing row upon row of native grapefruit, lemons, oranges, together with box after box of green vegetables as

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handsome as ever graced a Longchamps restaurant window. Shopping must be considerably more of a pleasure at these attractive Los Angeles open-air markets.

As the car approached the South Gramercy corner there flashed by a group of gay yellow open commercial trailers which rent for $1 a day, the Bilt-Rite Incinerators and Barbecues and Terminix Insulation. Just past Finnish Olympic Steam Baths and a Rio Grande Gas Station it was time to alight.

The library

The Metcalf house is almost hidden from its quiet street of modest homes by two huge evergreens, but once past them I could at once spy several rows of books. It was, I think, warm-hearted Teresa Cronin, who, one of my friends says, should be world-famous for her cookies, who opened the door on this occasion. Teresa has been a member of the household for many years and is said to have a real feeling for literature, particularly for work of the Louise Imogene Guiney and John Boyle O'Reilly era. She also seems interested in the progress of the library despite its emphasis on more recent literature. And there is an Irish twinkle in her eye.

Dr. Metcalf herself is a dynamic woman of moderate stature with snapping bright eyes and *pince-nez* glasses. Despite the fact that she and her sister, Sarah, lived in California from 1915 on, she still speaks with a crisp Boston accent. She is the type to speak out, obviously a person who gets things done. Her title is no honorary one, for she is a full-fledged M.D. and served as a doctor overseas in the last War. Sarah Metcalf, who died this April 29, served with her as a nurse.

It was on March 19, 1935, that Julia and Sarah opened at their home the library they had planned in order to extend to the public adequate facilities for Catholic reading. Six days later the library was blessed by an assistant of St. Thomas's parish and dedicated to Saint Thomas More. This took place several weeks before the English martyr's actual canonization ceremonies.

To start the library the Metcalfs had about a thousand books and pamphlets of their own, to which were added a few useful books voluntarily donated by their friends. From the first, the library has sought to provide the best of current Catholic literature, and in order to build up funds for the new books as they come along, a life membership fee of $1.00 was established. No membership charge is imposed on school and college students. The charge for borrowing a book is 2c a day. By these means, incredible as it may seem, the library was swelled to 4,000 volumes in the space of six years. A number of the Catholic publishers helped make this possible by favorable answers to a request for liberal discounts.

The library is open from two until six every afternoon and also on Monday and Friday evenings. Until Sarah Metcalf was taken ill last Christmas, friends of the library had a lecture and discussion there every Monday evening. No funds were available for lecture fees, but visitors in town, as well as local celebrities, accepted with alacrity an invitation to address the group. At times it seemed almost providential the way speakers would turn up. They have included men and women from Asia, Africa and all quarters of the globe; bishops, priests, missionaries, Sisters, poets, novelists, publishers, editors. The usual Monday evening gathering of 50 or 60 people taxes the modest Metcalf home to the utmost, but this informality is part of the library's charm. When Father Flanagan of Boys Town was to speak, the word quietly passed around and 200 people came to hear him, overflowing to the porch, the lawn and even the driveway outside the room in which he was speaking. Questions and informal discussion regularly follow every talk. The library is also the scene of the monthly meetings of the local unit of the Catholic Poetry Society of America.

Besides this the library serves as an unofficial bureau of information. On occasion producers from Hollywood send over to consult it. People are always calling up with one question or another. School and college students with book reports or more difficult assignments are always dropping in. Dr. Metcalf tells with delight of the spectacle of students sprawled out with books on her living room floor or hurling argumentative epithets at each other across the dining room table.

Books peer out the front door at the arriving visitors. Books and the few remaining empty shelves line both sides of vestibule and entrance hall. Books line the two front rooms, at the right of the entrance, which serve as the main part of the library. Good books are everywhere.

The largest and most popular section is devoted to biography and hagiography. Nearly as widely used are the volumes devoted to philosophy; economics and sociology are also in great demand. Three copies of Helen White's "To the End of the World" currently appear in the fiction section in the front hall; an equal number of Dorothy Day's "From Union Square to Rome" are featured there in the apologetics section. There are also such groupings as poetry, fine arts, liturgy, history, travel . . .

When Dr. Metcalf started out, the library file was a simple author and title affair. Since then an adequate subject file has been built up. There is now a fine cross reference file, too, and if you want to know what Thomas Aquinas had to say about war or private property or any other subject, it is comparatively simple at the St. Thomas More Library. Dr. Metcalf has the necessary

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judgment and experience, and she has become expert in helping the worried student who inquires rather dubiously what is to be found on such topics as the principle of double effect.

The books are classified and labeled according to the Dewey decimal system. The incorporation of three or four new volumes into the library consumes the good part of the morning, according to Dr. Metcalf, for there is classifying, labeling, pasting in the card holder, making out and filing the borrower's card and applying two coats of varnish to the back of every volume. She tells with keen amusement of the argument she had a short while ago with a librarian in the Boston Public Library, which still insists on maintaining a cataloguing system all its own. Bostonian superiority must have been forced to give way on this occasion.

In the early years a number of non-Catholics became deeply interested in the library, took out memberships and attended various meetings. Unhappily in recent months Dr. Metcalf has noted a bad falling off in the total borrowing of books, probably because of growing American apprehension about the course of the war. But the library and its friendships continue to grow and develop. The St. Thomas More Library has in a few short years become an important center of Catholic thought and culture.

It is now a natural thing to assume that to accomplish anything important you must first raise a lot of money. But apparently to do something similar to what the Metcalfs did, all you need is a home you will throw open to those who would be interested, and a modest collection of good books. If you know the field, have good judgment and good advice and have the gumption to start such an enterprise, the good that can be accomplished is incalculable. There are very few able or willing to conduct a St. Benet's Book Shop in a downtown office building at heavy personal expense, as Miss Sarah B. O'Neill has done in Chicago year after year. But with the help of a few friends it is often possible to start a useful Catholic library in your own home.

Nothing turns out exactly the way people expect, but the St. Thomas More Library has steadily expanded and still has apparently paid its own way. Electric light bills must be higher every month, and the wear and tear on the premises must be much greater, but Dr. Metcalf seems to think it is all well worth that price.

What has surprised her is the contacts she has made. She used to think she knew a lot of people before the library started; she had not realized what a number of friends such a venture can make. In addition, Monday evening speakers and other visitors have brought from all parts of the world a wealth of stimulus, companionship and inspiration. I suspect it is another case of a better mousetrap.

Views & Reviews

BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS

IN RE-READING recently some of the chapters of Lewis Mumford's valuable book, "Faith for Living," I was particularly impressed by the observations of a personal character made by its author in a brief but highly important note in which his chief intention in his work is presented. My interest in what Mr. Mumford says in this exposition of his purpose was increased by the fact that in an inscription in the copy (which he was kind enough to send me) of his valuable study of the inner forces now clashing and contending for the upper hand in the gigantic world revolution, Mr. Mumford wrote that he was forwarding his essay to me "in the hope that our fundamental agreements outweigh—or may cancel out—our differences." Generally speaking, Mr. Mumford's book may be, though inadequately, described as a reaffirmation of the great virtues and truths commonly associated with traditionalism: the family, religion, the value of the human person, liberty and humane civilization, on the part of a thinker, who, however, stands aloof from traditional religious belief. In other words, like many other "liberal" writers of today here and abroad, Mr. Mumford repudiates the shallow and rootless "liberalism" which until quite recently predominated in the Western world. He and they are most willing, even anxious, to effect an alliance with traditional forces, such as that associated with the Catholic Church, against the onrushing peril of new forms of barbarism inimical both to the traditional religion and modern liberalism alike. It is quite certain the Church welcomes all that that liberalism represents which may be harmonized with its own scale of values. What success the alliance may have in resisting the new barbarians, however, on terms acceptable to the liberals, is not so certain.

Mr. Mumford, indeed, while not so hopeless as Bertrand Russell for example, to whom despair itself seems the only rational position of modern liberalism, seems, in his note, to concede defeat for the forces opposed to totalitarianism. In a previous book, "Men Must Act," he tells us he "examined the cancerous nature of fascism and proposed an immediate policy for limiting its rapid spread into what still seemed healthy tissue" in our body politic. But he now thinks that his warning "appeared two years too early. Its words fell upon deaf ears and upon minds too comfortably padded, too nicely poised, too smugly self-assured, to be capable of timely action." And he fears that "Faith for Living" has the opposite defect, that it probably has come twenty years too late. "Even those who share its faith," laments Mr. Mumford, "or are belatedly converted to it, may be dead before they can make their beliefs fully manifest. At best, this book is a testament for survivors, if ever they reach shore."

In short, Mr. Mumford appears to have been visited by a keen sense of the apparent futility of prophesying, in the very act of issuing his warnings. Why, then, it might be asked, should he labor to write such books, and issue

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them? The only answer would seem to be that in Mr. Mumford, as in other men who, in the phrase of Nicholas Berdyaev, the "sense of the future" is operative, is motivated by faith rather than by the strict conclusions of their rational minds. Such men should remember that the spiritual history of the human race, as the Old Testament so abundantly proves, is replete with instances of the neglect meted out to the warnings of all the prophets—major or minor—who have ever tried to enlighten mankind. Writing about the catastrophes of our own age, Berdyaev speaks of many men, in many lands, "who had long been aware of imminent upheavals and had discerned symptoms in the spiritual order beyond the confines of a neatly arranged and tranquil life, for things happen in the reality of the mind before they are made manifest in the external reality of history." As the Russian philosopher himself pointed out, "there was something shaken and shattered in the soul of modern man before ever his historical values were upset."

Perhaps the chief fault of all, or let us say the majority, of the idealistic liberals of recent generations who are now suffering such keen disillusion, and belatedly turning toward age-old traditions which they deserted in the day of their own ascendancy over the minds of their more unenlightened readers, was their refusal to allow to traditional religion, especially to the Christian religion and above all to the Catholic Church, any truth or validity or practical application, save only to the purely temporal aspects of traditional religion.

To the supernatural teachings of the Church, and the modes in which religious authority manifested itself, they were almost universally opposed. It was the Kingdom of God upon earth, and upon earth alone, which they were ready to accept, at least as an idea, and which, through various forms of social and political and educational panaceas, they strove to realize. The central fact of Christian teaching that insisted upon the relative nature of all purely temporal schemes of happiness, security and peace, and looked beyond this life to the realization of complete happiness, they resolutely rejected.

But if Christianity is not mere dreaming, since, as Christians must say, Christianity is true, and all other forms of belief and all actions predicated upon partial truths, or falsehoods, must inevitably fail to realize the ideals of their followers, the idealistic liberals have not recognized the tragic nature of human life, and in one form or another have deluded themselves, and the world they dominated, with Utopian mirages. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that so many of them should now feel that, like the assistance sent to so many small nations, their thoughts and their ideals have been arrived at too late. However, in Mr. Mumford's case, I am glad to note, faith survives the shock of his awakening to some at least of the tragic realities of our situation. In pointing the way to the traditional values of humanity, so long neglected or ignored or repudiated, he writes: "Forgetfulness of these ideals has helped to bring on the very catastrophe we must live through; remembrance of them may help us to survive them." It is to that hope that humanity must cling. And Christians will be helped by the further remembrance that hope itself is a basic value, one of the "supernatural" virtues. Mr. Mumford's book, fortunately, will be more useful for supporting hope than it is in pointing out the futility of warnings.

Communications

NEGRO SEMINARY

New Hope, Pa.

TO the Editors: I am surprised at Father LaFarge's misunderstanding of certain incidental remarks in my article on the Negro seminary at Bay St. Louis. When I wrote that certain orders were becoming "actively interested" in work among the Negroes, I meant precisely that. To phrase it differently, a great deal of the interest in Negroes among Catholics has been theoretical and passive, as distinguished from practical and active. Father LaFarge knows very well that I knew of the Jesuits' work in Maryland dating back to the eighteenth century, because he knows I have lived in St. Mary's County for a year or more. I would therefore like to emphasize that I was not ambiguous when I said that the Jesuits were making "definite moves." Outside of the work that Father LaFarge and his successor, that great man, Father Horace McKenna, did and are doing in the Negro parish at Ridge, Maryland, I would not say that the work of the Jesuits among the Negroes in Southern Maryland was particularly active. I even thought specifically of their more recent work among the Negroes of St. Louis when I spoke of their new moves.

Everyone knows that there are more orders of priests interested in the American Negro than I mentioned in my article. I was dealing with a specific phase of that work and for my purposes at the time thought it best to leave some things unsaid, or at least unstressed. Since Father LaFarge has raised the issues, I will now state them, or one of them: that if there are that many Catholic priests interested in the American Negro and working among them, then the fact that less than 3 percent of those Negroes are Catholics offers its own commentary.

HARRY SYLVESTER.

FOOD FOR CONQUERED EUROPE

West Baden Springs, Ind.

TO the Editors: When it is a professor of philosophy who argues for a policy of consent to the extreme distress and probable starvation of the innocent and the helpless, no apologies are due for desiderating rigorous premises. Professor MacMahon is not rigorous when he alleges (in his communication printed in THE COMMONWEAL, April 4) the claims of generations yet unborn against the claims of human flesh and blood that live and suffer now. Real rights, real claims to our compassion reside in real persons, not in those who may be real hereafter. Even for these, it is not by quashing the sovereign prerogatives of charity we shall have prepared a better world. "The War," wrote Norman Angell twenty years ago, "has left us a defective or perverted social sense, with a group of instincts and morali-

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ties that are disintegrating Western society, and will, unless checked, destroy it." (*The Fruits of Victory*, New York, 1921, p. 60.) It is of some moment that the vestiges of mercy among men be hoarded carefully.

Lenin no more than Hitler would have consented to arrangements quite incompatible with his own designs. When Pius XI, with experience already, and full awareness that relief to Russia had its hazards, nevertheless determined to complete his ministry to Lenin's subjects, he largely anticipated the contention that to feed Hitler's victims is to jeopardize their souls. So long as Britain refuses to explore with complete sympathy seriously accredited proposals for their relief, we are entitled to express our profound regret.

REV. EDGAR R. SMOTHERS, S.J.

OUT OF THE NIGHT?

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: The article-review in THE COMMONWEAL by Father H. A. Reinhold of the book "Out of the Night" contained one paragraph so peculiar for its anonymous quotation and an inference so false as to bring me astonishment. It read: "I also learned the reaction of a Catholic, a person close to the *Catholic Worker*: 'Too much repetition and perhaps a lot of untruth.' How strange! 'Too much repetition'—as if Valtin had the task of arranging a fiction! Of course, his tedious parallelism is sometimes tiring, but does that render Valtin suspicious? On the contrary."

The anonymous "person" of the paragraph herewith identifies himself as the undersigned. . . . But why should the reviewer have added to his anonymous "person" the qualifying "close to the *Catholic Worker*"? Probably he had something in mind. But whether or no, I wish to remove the implication and erroneous impression possibly conveyed, that my voice and criticism was the voice and criticism of the *Catholic Worker*.

Now that the anonymous critic of Valtin has been properly identified, let me say that more correctly reported or quoted it would have read, "the book could well have been cut by some 200 or 300 pages." I would now amend that by adding: "or by 750 pages." For is not the amount and value of new information given by Valtin to what is already generally known of communist propaganda and penetration or of their torture propensities and performances just about nil? On the other hand, it can scarcely be gainsaid that like a gardener's dibble, the book is a most serviceable tool to hole the soil of America for the setting of the catalytic shoots of lies, hate, horror, fear and war transported from the nurseries of Europe.

However, I am willing to accept as near enough, the quote of the reviewer, "too much repetition." But to his "How strange!" I ask "How come?" Didn't he write of Valtin that strangely composed sentence: "Of course, his *tedious* parallelism is *sometimes tiring*"? And what, I ask, might be the difference between his "tedious parallelism" and by "too much repetition"? About as much, think I, as that between the tails of two cats. They serve the same purpose.

But when people are told that I suspected any man's credibility because of "too much repetition" I get my Irish up and yell "Hold on there! That's much too much. What manner of man is a reviewer anyway? (I often was minded to ask that.) Why did he have to make my criticism silly and stupid by changing my *and* into a *therefore* and start indiscriminate bombing at non-aggressors (the Catholic Worker and myself), aiming his torpedo-bomb question, "Does that render Valtin suspicious?" True, I suspected Valtin's credibility. Not from his "too much repetition" or his "tedious parallelism" (if you will), but from out of his own lips. Didn't the man confess himself a felon (deceiving on the nature of the peculiarly vicious crime), a Communist conspirator, a nazi agent, a falsifier? What more does an unbiased man want to make him suspicious? But above and beyond, I suspected Valtin's credibility mostly for what the reviewer himself called his "revolting exhibitionism" and his taint of sex morbidness. Most extraordinary that Father Reinhold should have vouched Valtin's veracity practically 100 per cent (95 per cent perfect, 5 per cent merely "retouched") ranking him a second George Washington! About on a par with those who made Stalin a member in good standing of the Democratic party, fit to fight for the "four freedoms"! Queer and fearful, surely are the times we live in. Glory be to the days of the Tower of Babel, when a man might have stood some chance of making himself understood by another in one language at least!

STEPHEN A. JOHNSON.

The Stage & Screen

More on Saroyan

I WOULD be the last to urge that William Saroyan become the founder of a school. Indeed between Mr. Saroyan and the very word "school" there is an antinomy. No one will ever write like him, no matter how hard one may try. It is better so. Mr. Saroyan, for all his admirable qualities would be a poor model to follow, for copyists usually attain the form of a model rather than its informing spirit. As Mr. Saroyan's work is largely without form, this would be disastrous. And yet Mr. Saroyan may be of importance as a landmark, or rather as a sign marking the turning of the road. For a quarter of a century we have gone down the road at the end of which we were told was the truth. Beauty we were informed was old hat; what we must aim at is reality in the raw, the very raw. Good and evil, loveliness and ugliness were poured into a cauldron together, and the result was what might have been expected. We are drinking today from it, a witch's brew indeed—in life, desolation, terror and despair; in literature, futility. Yes. The realists have had their triumph indeed, and in the process beauty and nobility, and with them poetry, have been trampled under the hob-nailed boots of materialism. There are many who are coming to the view that what is

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needed in literature is a new renascence of wonder, a rebirth of romanticism. And this is where Mr. Saroyan comes in. He has thrown the gauntlet of the romantic full in the face of realism.

It is odd that a school of writers which has proclaimed its belief in the people should have concerned itself with things the people abominate. The people are romantic, and always have been. Witness the movies and magazine fiction. But unfortunately the movies and the magazines have been the refuge of the third rate; their romanticism hackneyed, false, unimaginative. The writing intelligensia have held themselves aloof, superior, but on the whole unread. And so it has been in the theatre—proletarian plays are not patronized by the proletariat, or middle-class dramas by the middle-classes. Both alike prefer the movies. Now whether Mr. Saroyan's latest play, "The Beautiful People," will appeal to the people I don't know; the people have a strange love for form. But I am certain that the spirit which animates this play is the spirit which the people long for. There is an odd similarity between Saroyan and Dickens; both believe in kindness, goodness, the basic human virtues; both draw characters who live lives of their own and yet who exemplify human needs and aspiration. Saroyan like Dickens is a romantic.

And here just because I feel Mr. Saroyan has so much to give the world I want to offer the suggestion to him I have made above. The people love form, and they are right in loving it. Without form there can be no concentration of effect. In the first act of "Love's Old Sweet Song," the finest thing to my mind Mr. Saroyan has done, there was this sense of form; lovely a thing as "The Beautiful People" is, it is less completely satisfying than the first act of his earlier play just because it is so formless. Mr. Saroyan has great talent, perhaps even genius, but the arts must not be allowed to be always like truant boys, all play and no work. The intellect, the will, the critical sense, have their places even in the romantic. A writer cannot forever be a Peter Pan. There *is* ugliness and deviltry in the world. Even Mr. Saroyan can't make San Francisco Utopia just by wishing it. Thank God, though, he does wish it and believes it possible. But in his next play, won't he concentrate his efforts a little more, and give a thought or two to form?

GRENVILLE VERNON.

Pretty Girls Do Not a Movie Make

"*THE FLAME OF NEW ORLEANS*" is a picturesque whimsy for adults about a bad woman who pretends she's a countess to ensnare a wealthy bachelor and then leaves him at the altar for a dashing sailor. Director René Clair has treated Norman Krasna's screenplay as if it were an old wives' tale more to be laughed at than believed in—which is all right, but I wish he'd given us even more to laugh at by going even further with his satire. Perhaps if Marlene Dietrich hadn't taken herself so seriously, but had fallen into the playful mood of Roland Young as the eligible banker and Bruce Cabot as the sportive pirate, the whole thing might have ripped along more gaily. Not that René Clair held up his show with a lot of close-ups of Marlene; there are so few that one can hardly tell if she wears her false eyelashes. Of course there are some lovely shots of the pretty lady showing a frilly Marlene all lace and ruffles with blond curls tumbling over her head as she lies abed eating delectable bonbons; or a demure Marlene bright-eyed and wet-lipped among the honeysuckle; or a siren Marlene with bangs and black veil worn to fool her fiancé into thinking her bad reputation belongs to her sister. Quite in keeping with the legendary tone of the film is Joe Pasternak's story-book, old New Orleans production. While devotees of René Clair will be disappointed in his first Hollywood picture, they should be pleased at certain episodes which indicate his best French style: the film's travelogue opening with the wedding dress floating on the Mississippi River; Marlene's fainting at the opera to catch Roland's eye—but also catching the eyes of the audience, the orchestra and the singers; and that delightful scene, mostly in pantomime, with Marlene singing at the spinet while Mischa Auer whispers the scandal which spreads from person to person until it reaches her fiancé's ears. Please, M. Clair, give us more of this kind of humor and don't bother with the conventional stuff.

"*Ziegfeld Girl*" proves that a star-studded cast *and* staircases full of shapely bodies do not necessarily make good cinema. Although the picture continues the Ziegfeld legend and Ziegfeld's glorification of the American girl, Director Robert Z. Leonard could not leap the pitfalls of a dull, trite and overcrowded plot. As the story dawdles along many by-paths and attempts to illustrate that a girl can win her Z and retain her virtue, it follows the careers of three Ziegfeld girls. Lana Turner is torn between her two natures and her two "boyfriends": Ian Hunter, in an ambiguous, wealthy-suitor rôle, gives Lana sables, diamonds, a Park Avenue apartment, but not marriage; James Stewart, badly miscast as a Brooklyn truck-driver, offers Lana a five-ton truck—and becomes a bootlegger when she refuses. Dead-but-beautiful-panned Hedy Lamarr, in persuading her husband (Philip Dorn) that she should be in the Follies, says, "You put on beads or something and walk up and down." In her walking she almost goes astray with Singer Tony Martin, but is set straight again by Martin's wife, Rose Hobart. And the third girl rises to the top the hard way, becomes a star, sings well the Calypso-like "Minnie from Trinidad," wins the admiration of Jackie Cooper. As her father (Charles Winninger) teams up with Al Shean to sing the famed "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean," you regret that the film didn't use more of the old Follies songs and at least some of the clever Follies acts. However, if you like staircases and staircases and beautiful girls walking up and down 'em, "Ziegfeld Girl" is your picture.

While its plot is no great improvement over that in the Ziegfeld film, "*The Great American Broadcast*" at least makes an honest effort to be entertaining. And several times it succeeds—thanks mainly to Jack Oakie's funny clowning that helps a commonplace story over its dull spots. Furthermore, the song and dance acts have been staged with speed and without straining to be supercolossal. Alice Faye, John Payne and Oakie seem to enjoy singing over an improvised "mike," and the specialty num-

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bers by The Four Ink Spots, the Wiere Brothers and the fast-stepping Nicholas Brothers are first rate. Director Archie Mayo, in glossing over a weak script full of factual errors, intersperses corny lines with some good new songs and plenty of old ones. All this goes back to 1919 and follows the career of radio from the days of head-phone receiving sets, through the broadcast of the July Fourth Dempsey-Willard fight, through the days when radio was taken over by such advertisers as Chapman's Cheerful Cheeses, and finally to the big, first coast-to-coast hook-up. You'll have enough fun watching the whole procedure to stick around for the inevitable finale in which Oakie reunites before a microphone the fallen-out Faye and Payne.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

A Different Wave

By SAMPLER

HAVING given us a generalized analysis of the nature of nazism-fascism-communism, with particular emphasis on the first element in the compound, and having followed that with a somewhat blood-curdling report of conversations with his erstwhile friend, Adolf Hitler, Hermann Rauschning now publishes his own systematic concept of political science in general. Like everything he writes, it is highly intelligent, informed and stimulating. So much so that almost every page has a phrase, a sentence or a whole paragraph that makes a reviewer itch to quote it. Of course there will be people who do not like his views, and such people will not all be nazis either. Americans whose feeling about England are none too friendly will cry wolf, and will dismiss the book as propaganda or the rationalization of some political grudge. Those who refuse to credit the nazi régime with being as bad as its enemies say it is will also refuse, as they have refused in the past, Rauschning's testimony. But (despite its title) his book is far removed from the ordinary catchwords and empty verbalisms of so much contemporary thinking; it is so "tough" in its approach that it is bound to have its effect, even on the thinking of those who find its ideas least congenial. As a literary production, the worst that can be said of it is that it is a trifle fuzzy around the edges; and who can write on such problems without being fuzzy?

To discuss "The Redemption of Democracy"* with any degree of thoroughness would take up far more space than is here available; it therefore seems wiser to concentrate on one or two points which should be of particular interest to readers of THE COMMONWEAL, and to hope that for the rest these remarks will lead them to the book itself.

Rauschning may be placed squarely in the tradition of thought which some of us consider central and characteristic of Western culture—the tradition of the common law, of the separation of powers, of dividing the things of God from the things of Caesar, the tradition of Edmond Burke. He is opposed to centralization, the absolute state. He thinks compromise, conciliation are good things in themselves, and that in politics the only tolerable means are "pure" means, or, more precisely, that politics must eschew the use of impure means as a settled policy. Thus England may have broken treaties when it suited her convenience. That is a bad thing. But she has never made it *a policy* to consider treaties as something which she is free to break at convenience, and in this she differs from and is to be preferred to the fascist states.

The great danger, then, is the total, the unitary, the absolute State, which imposes its plans upon its people, using them (to paraphrase Kant) as instruments rather than as ends. All the fashionable tendencies of the last two hundred years—particularly the last hundred—lead to such a State, however little the creators of such fashions have realized what they were doing. Rauschning restates the favorite political dictum of Irving Babbitt, who, I believe, got the notion from Fustel de Coulanges:

> The man "inwardly free" of all restraints requires total coercion from outside. This is the result of a progress that sees itself essentially as the disintegration of all restrains and concepts of order. Anyone who regards the essence of religion as a human neurosis that must be uncovered like any other neurotic affliction can hardly afford to be surprised if a mundane doctrine with every right to exercise the cruelest coercion is proclaimed as universally valid in its stead.

All the pragmatism, the moral liberalism, the naturalism of the nineteenth century, the deliberately amoral approach of most psychology—all this leads more and more toward the "freeing" of the individual in his personal life and toward the promotion of coercion by the State. In many ways the Hobbsian Leviathan has been and is the wave of the future.

But there are other social attitudes which have survived and which are strong, particularly in the "Anglo-Saxon" world: social insistence upon personal morality (which can degenerate into puritanism), the deep value attached to compromise (not as a sign of weakness, but as a concomitant of Christian humility: in *human* affairs, no man can be absolutely right; therefore I cannot be wholly right; therefore compromise is good), affection for and loyalty to institutions other than the state, insistence upon tradition and history as having value for the future and not as being merely the dead lies of the past (the basis of Burke's revulsion against the *tabula rasa,* the "pure reason" attitude of the French Revolution). Rauschning does not point it out, but these qualities are also Chinese qualities, and they are not foreign to certain types of Frenchmen. It is only, he feels, by the vitality of such attitudes that the totalitarian State can be resisted, not only in war, but especially in peace.

If, then, England were to declare as her war aims the restoration of a post-Versailles Europe, if she were to advocate a turning back of the clock, she would be untrue to her own genius; she would be a doctrinaire just as much as Hitler, only with a worse doctrine. For political democracy *coupled with* an absolutely autonomous idea of nationality—a Europe of many small and some medium-

* The Redemption of Democracy. Hermann Rauschning. Alliance. $3.00.

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sized states, with tariff barriers and all the old rivalries—is a retrograde doctrine. Hitler can with logic and truth call his way more progressive. Rather the aim of reconstruction must be the building up out of a hundred different traditions some sort of unified Europe, with plenty of regional differences and autonomies, but without either the rigidity of an absolute German hegemony or the old rigidities of a lot of absolutely autonomous states.

Of course all this would be far easier—indeed perhaps the problem would not exist—if the temper of European society had remained Christian. But it has not. The great tragedy of the nineteenth century did not lie only in the turning of the workers away from the Church; it lay also in the de-Christianizing of the whole of social life. This is why, as Maritain has repeatedly said, any attempt to set up an officially and specifically Christian régime is full of danger. Christianity can and should *inspire* political action; in our world it cannot serve as its absolute blueprint.

> The . . . attempt to create a moral authority, making the Christian faith and the church the basis of the social order, unquestionably touches upon the crucial weakness of modern states and societies. But can we restore a lost ethical foundation by decree? Can we compel a Christian life by authoritarian measures? Are we not tempted at last, even if with good intentions, to employ the methods of outward terror for this spiritual end? This signifies completely missing the real purpose of any re-Christianization and any common faith sustained by true conviction. At best we have a new kind of clericalism. A Christian foundation by decree, a forced Christianization, could not produce much better results, in an extreme case, than the enforced world concepts of the existing totalitarian régimes.

That paragraph alone entitles the book to high praise; coming as it does from an evangelical Protestant. Of course what is said applies historically to Catholic attempts of the sort. Rauschning goes on to consider the possibilities of a true Christian revival as a moral basis for society. He finds few hopeful signs. And he issues a pertinent warning:

> . . . all intended efforts at a renaissance of Christianity are subject to an implacable tribunal. Good will and the intention to believe are not enough. A "planned" Christian Action such as would seem necessary to us for a regeneration of the Western world would be the most insipid, senseless and destructive undertaking among all the planning enterprises that occupy so many of our contemporaries. It will fail because influences outside faith itself—maintenance of a social order, the restoration of orderly functioning in the state, an ethical basis for civilization—do not really lead to faith, but only to a belief that faith is necessary. "Men often take their imagination for their heart," says Pascal, "and they think they are converts as soon as they begin to think about becoming converted." Merely to realize the necessity of conversion is not Christianity.

All of this is on the face of it true and to be welcomed for its "toughness." Let us not deceive ourselves that an increased interest in religion means an increase in religion itself. But in one thing Rauschning sees a possible hope. After generations of denying the existence of the devil (and in practice millions even of Catholics do just that), events are forcing us once again to admit that evil exists. And that admission, strangely enough, *can* lead people to belief in God.

> Perhaps, after all, during these past years something new has touched us—something new to *us*, but actually forever old. We have learned the reality of evil, the metaphysical power and effect of evil. This Leviathan is evil. In the Gospel sense it is the tempter, promising all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if only one will fall down and worship. It is the evil whose strength and violence we have realized through the dissension and torments of these past years. It is not human evil, no petty, every-day baseness, but the power, the quite admirable force of magnificent evil. . . . From this experience of evil a path may open to the experience of the faith in which evil is vanquished.

"The Redemption of Democracy" sees no cure-all in a British military victory for which its author cannot help but hope. Rather is it concerned with "winning the peace" if such a military victory comes to be. One thing only it asserts: that in the long run Leviathan will die. The British Empire could be the instrument of this death, but here the question is not so much: Has that Empire the military strength? as Has it the wisdom?

Books of the Week

Yeats

The Poetry of W. B. Yeats. Louis MacNeice. Oxford. $2.50.

Scattering Branches. (Tributes to the Memory of W. B. Yeats.) Edited by Stephen Gwynn. Macmillan. $2.00.

FIFTEEN years ago Mr. I. A. Richards could write, in a footnote: "A weakness of the modern Irish school (even at its best, in Mr. Yeats) . . . may be that its sensibility is a development out of the main track. It is this which seems to make it minor poetry in a sense in which Mr. Hardy's best work or Mr. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' is major poetry." I wonder whether Mr. Richards would write so today. Of course Richards could hardly have known that Yeats would do what perhaps no other poet has done: not merely write lyric poetry throughout all of a long life, but write by far the greatest of his lyrics during his last dozen years; almost all lyric poets die young, or dry up. But that notion of "major" poetry, which was not Richards's alone fifteen years ago, may also have been a shade naïve.

Certainly two years ago we knew that it was a major poet—who greater in our time?—that had died. These two books, like the rest that has been written of Yeats since his death, proceed from that as an assumption. "Scattering Branches" is slight and gracious, a collection of tributes to Yeats from his friends and associates, and from one, C. Day Lewis, who was evidently selected as representative of the younger poets. The essays, except for some comments by Lennox Robinson and W. G. Fay on Yeats in the theatre, do not tell us much new about his work. What they make clearer is Yeats's personality, that so wonderfully fascinated almost all who ever met him. They enable us to correct, if we still had any doubts left after reading Yeats, what seems certainly a misunderstanding on Louis MacNeice's part: that Yeats was a *poseur*. The pose, if it was a pose, was simply Yeats. And it is interesting to observe that those who, like Robinson

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and Fay, worked with Yeats in the development of the Irish Theatre strongly reject the usual opinion, shared by MacNiece, that Yeats is a failure as a dramatist. The explanation seems to be that they think of Yeats not merely as the writer of his plays, but as the active force, directed toward every problem of production and growth, that, more than any other, made the Irish Theatre possible.

"The Poetry of W. B. Yeats" is a more extended critical enterprise than the little volume of tributes. It contains an analytic survey of Yeats's work together with a fair amount of relevant biographical and historical material. Louis MacNeice, as one of the best of the new generation of poets—himself, like Yeats, born in Ireland but assimilated also into the English literary tradition—was an appropriate choice for author.

MacNeice explains the purpose of his book as follows: "The poets who interest me are the poets whom I like re-reading. I like re-reading Yeats more than I like re-reading most English poets. This is why I undertook to write a book about his poetry; I wished to find out why Yeats appealed to me so much and I hoped also to present Yeats sympathetically to others." This modest and simple aim seems to me altogether proper for a book about a poet, especially one written by a fellow-poet. Where MacNeice sticks to it, he is often successful and illuminating. Through his own sensitivity and intelligence, he makes clearer to us the nature of Yeats's poetic problems, the successes and failures of individual poems, some of the reasons for the remarkable changes and developments that took place during the long course of Yeats's poetic career.

Unfortunately, MacNeice does not always stay within the limits of his stated aim. Too often, as conspicuously in the long introductory chapter and in the unmotivated and quite absurd final chapter on "Some Comparisons," he leaps off into philosophical and "social" discussion that he is plainly not fitted to handle.

And I am not sure that MacNeice likes Yeats well enough. Or, perhaps, his own point of view blocks the road to some, and some of the greatest, of Yeats. MacNeice, like most of his group among the English poets, for several years went through his period of fellow-traveling communism. Though he has, like most of the others, ostensibly left that route, some of the crude categories picked up on the way remain to plague him. Three times he airily remarks about Yeats's "tendency to fascism," without the slightest effort to present a basis for so pointless a judgment. And sometimes, as in discussing the influence of Yeats's Irish nationalism or aristocratic bias on his poetry, MacNeice seems to be using the hammer of the pamphleteer rather than the fine instruments of the poetic surgeon.

I wonder, too, whether MacNeice's own beliefs permit him sufficient sympathy with the central problem of all, for Yeats: that, being "very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom [he] detested, of the simple-minded religion of [his] childhood," he had to seek always a new religion, in art, in feelings, in Ireland, in Plotinus and the occult and Berkeley, in metaphor and the flesh and visions. This problem Yeats never solved; but his greatest poetry is the record of his efforts at solution:

> *My Soul.* I summon to the winding ancient stair;
> Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
> Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
> Upon the breathless starlit air,
> Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
> Fix every wandering thought upon
> That quarter where all thought is done:
> Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

JAMES BURNHAM.

CRITICISM

Do These Bones Live. Edward Dahlberg. Harcourt. $3.00.

THE CHRISTIAN accepts a law of tension as the law of life. Man is divided within himself, and his achievement in any field—morals, art, science, politics—depends on his keeping a balance between conflicting forces.

Mr. Dahlberg is a romantic in the tradition of D. H. Lawrence, and sees no point in tension. Man should follow his "irrational fluidic impulses," that "secret wisdom that is prior to logic—the vibrant god-telling PULSE." Those institutions which conspire with reason to maintain the tension—doctrine, the state, ties of social brotherhood—should yield to the anarchy and selfishness inherent in romantic individualism.

The author is mainly concerned to apply his principles to American literature, though he touches on other literature, and civilization in general. Accepting the Freudian theory that all motives reduce to the libido, he discovers in the works of Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Poe—who yet are the best of our writers—vast cloudy symbols of sexual inhibition. He even finds "swollen erotical dementia" in Shakespeare. "No poet in America . . . ever knew the cataclysms of ravening venery, evil." This "renunciation of the carnal heart and flesh" in American literature has led to its ugly opposite, naturalism. Moreover, by depriving us of "earth wisdom," it has produced the shallow regionalism, and the dreary sociological fiction, which in America are substitutes for a literature of deep consciousness.

As to the author's Freudian method of criticism, now that so many psychologists have departed from this fashion, it might be passed over as a nostalgic retrospection to the days of D. H. Lawrence. We are tempted to recall how Ronald Knox once used the methods of higher criticism to prove that Queen Victoria wrote "In Memoriam." A willful Freudian could no doubt convict almost any author of a subconscious obsession with sex. But it would still not be demonstrated that a conscious obsession is better. Needless to say, when this kind of criticism is applied to the gospel, the impertinence no longer seems merely silly.

Luckily the author's style will prevent a popular resurrection of his unhealthy ideas. There is controlled beauty in a few passages, and a directness of observation and feeling in phrases like "a haggard fast of silence"; "the orchidaceous fumes of . . . gasoline." But as a rule the style is overloaded with exclamations, italics and capitals, and obscured by ellipsis, the use of odd or invented words, a profusion of metaphors too often slightly inaccurate, and mere want of order. The law of tension applies in literature as in other forms of achievement, and just letting oneself go may result in a kind of mumbled fireworks, but is not a formula for good writing. ALBERT J. STEISS.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The Consumer Movement. Helen Sorenson. Harper. $2.50.

THE CONSUMER MOVEMENT is one of the few non-political attempts that have been made today to examine the problem of the common good. Because of its apparent position between the Scylla of capitalism and the Charybdis of communism, it is peculiarly susceptible to the pressure of special interest groups. The types of relationship that can exist between producer and con-

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sumer border on the infinite, and it is in an effort to show how the best interests of both can be served that Helen Sorenson has compiled "The Consumer Movement."

The complex industrial system that has grown up in the last century has concealed the supplementary relation of production and consumption, overlaying real needs with conveniences and luxuries, with propaganda and advertising. On the other hand, where there is no longer a frontier, each individual is perforce thrown in closer contact with the economic functioning of society. A single income depends on the coordination of production and exchange in a complicated maze of relationships.

In the boom years, emphasis was on production, but with the depression and lower incomes, the problems of consumption became more acute and the consumer movement began to receive increasing attention. Protective legislation was introduced. Simultaneously a number of books appeared on the subject: "Your Money's Worth" by Stuart Chase and F. J. Schlink, "100,000,000 Guinea Pigs" by Arthur Kallet and F. J. Schlink, "Skin Deep" by Mary Phillips—to name a few. Even in government undertakings, such as the NRA and the AAA, consumer agencies were represented.

Year by year the problem of extending real income has become increasingly part of the public thinking. Science has been harnessed in such consumer commodity testing agencies as Consumers' Research, Intermountain Consumers' Service, and Consumers Union. Consumer education has become a part of the curriculum of colleges and even of secondary schools. General organizations such as the American Association of University Women, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, as well as a number of welfare, religious, farmer and labor groups, have adopted consumer objectives.

A very important element in the consumer movement is the consumer cooperative. This would necessarily be the case, since the most obvious way for the consumer to obtain satisfaction is by joining an enterprise that is specifically organized to undermine monopoly price structure. The formation of all such groups follows pretty much the same approximate outline: ". . . open membership; one man, one vote; limited interest on capital; sale for cash at market prices; dividends paid on the basis of patronage. A group of facilitating principles is often added: neutrality in race, religion and politics; constant cooperative education; constant cooperative expansion."

By far the most delicate problem the consumer movement has to face is its relation to business. Because business interests are so vitally affected by any developments along consumer lines, there have been many attempts by business and advertising to undermine the movement. Directly, efforts have been made to discredit the most active groups and individuals through propaganda; indirectly, similar organizations have deliberately been set up to confuse the issues. In some cases, however, a greater sense of social responsibility among business men has actually been stimulated, resulting in such institutions as the National Consumer-Retailer Council, the American Standards Association and various better business bureaus.

At this time the consumer movement has the highly complex and important task before it of meeting the newly created difficulties which the defense industry has introduced. This invaluable work is carried on by the National Defense Advisory Commission, whose seven members are studying how best to fortify the consumer against the intensification of his problem in the present crisis and what steps will be necessary in the readjustment of the Nation's activity in peacetime.

Although the issues stressed by one consumer group may be widely different from those considered important by another, certain demands are basic. Miss Sorenson sums these up as "a desire for the greatest possible real income, the demand for more information about commodities . . . the recognition of the need for integrity in buying and selling; and the insistence on independence in education and action." There can be no doubt from the researches contained in this book that the consumer problem has penetrated even to the remote corners of the general consciousness. There remains the need for concerted consumer action.

MARGARET STERN.

The Aviation Business: From Kitty Hawk to Wall Street. Elspeth Freudenthal. Vanguard. $3.00.

MISS FREUDENTHAL at one time managed an investment advisory service, and it is with the fine calm of a professional securities analyst that she surveys the alarming financial history of American aviation. Her detachment lends a nice emphasis to the many disquieting disclosures which she offers as the proof of her patient research.

"No American-built planes for pursuit, bombing or combat reached the front," she summarizes the progress of US manufacturing in the World War. Certain individuals, however, profited hugely from the conflict. A patents pool was formed. Machines were recommended by the aircraft board for apparently interested reasons. One member of the board was evidently deserving of court-martial. Such, at least, was the opinion of Chief Justice Hughes.

If, during the 'twenties, a lull set in in profit-taking, that lull proved temporary. From March, 1928, to December, 1929, the public subscribed for $1,000,000,000 of aviation securities. By 1932, those securities were worth only $50,000,000.

In the period from 1927 to 1933, four great combines emerged as dominant: the General Motors-North American group, Curtiss-Wright, United Aircraft and Transportation and, lastly, Aviation Corporation of Delaware. Under the Air Mail Act of 1934, transport companies were legally divorced from manufacturing companies. Miss Freudenthal concludes her study with the subsequent reorganization of the "great four." Of course she has not forgotten to inform us of the marvelous manipulations of E. L. Cord.

In fine, "The Aviation Business" is a most welcome and altogether necessary addition to the history of American finance.

WAYNE ANDREWS.

HISTORY

The Franciscan Missions of California. John A. Berger. Putnam. $3.50.

WITH SO MANY more or less commendable books published on the California missions, one should think writers would refrain from producing more on the subject and turn their attention to other fields of our Spanish-American history. There are the Florida missions, for instance, concerning which we have practically nothing that appeals to the general reading public, while the history of the Southwest missions of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona has attracted only a few writers whose books would have a chance of becoming "best sellers." One reason for the neglect of this field may be

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the fact that here the scientific historian is still engaged in spade work upon which the popular writer is dependent, whereas the history of the California missions has been duly extracted from documental mines and made available to those whose chief aim in writing is to please and entertain the general reading public.

By his excellent volume, "The Franciscan Missions of California," Mr. Berger has definitely merited a place among such as endeavor to array the structure of historical truth in the attractive habiliments of art. As a popular account his volume should rank among the best, both as to correctness of content and as to beauty of form. It does not contain anything that is new, barring the welcome inclusion of some matters pertaining to the recent restoration work at some of the missions. The volume might very aptly be termed an epitome of the "forbiddingly" scientific volumes published between 1908 and 1915 by the well-known historian of the California missions, Father Zephyrin Engelhardt. The first six of its chapters, comprising a survey of the history of the missions as a whole, are a sort of compendium of the three-volume "General History" of Engelhardt's "Missions and Missionaries of California," while the twenty-one chapters that follow correspond to Engelhardt's "Local Histories" of the missions. What all these volumes lack—the artistic touch—the one under review possesses in a marked degree. This new account of the California missions is not only beautiful in make-up but also eminently readable—this latter quality a distinction that, I know for certain, was not sought for by Engelhardt. "When my work is done and I am dead," he often told me, "someone can write a readable volume on the basis of the dry documents I am producing." Such a volume Mr. Berger has now produced and, were "the old man of the missions" still alive, he would undoubtedly be the first to extend to Mr. Berger the glad word of praise and commendation which his volume certainly merits. Little flaws he would find here and there and suggest that they be corrected. This would not prevent him, however, from approving Mr. Berger's volume and seconding the present reviewer's opinion that this latest work on the California missions deserves to be classed among the best of its kind.

FRANCIS BORGIA STECK.

The Other Side of the Jordan. Nelson Glueck. American Schools of Oriental Research. $2.50.

THE SPLENDIDLY illustrated volume gives a popular scientific account of an archeologist's explorations in Transjordan and the Wadi Arabah. Since not only the chapters on the desert ruins, King Solomon's copper mines, his seaport and metallurgical refinery of Ezion-geber, the kingdoms of Moab and Edom and the extraordinary ruins of the Nabataean civilization, but even a good part of the introduction of biblical archeology, are based almost exclusively on the author's discoveries of the past decade, we may justly infer that his book should interest the serious reader and, for some years to come, be indispensable for the professional biblical scholar.

The absence of historical literary records for this country requires Dr. Glueck to present these materials essentially in a descriptive form. Nevertheless he has succeeded remarkably well in integrating an historical picture, and this in spite of the fact that the lack of stratified tells (with the notable exception of Ezion-geber) has necessitated the comparative study of pottery to establish chronological relations.

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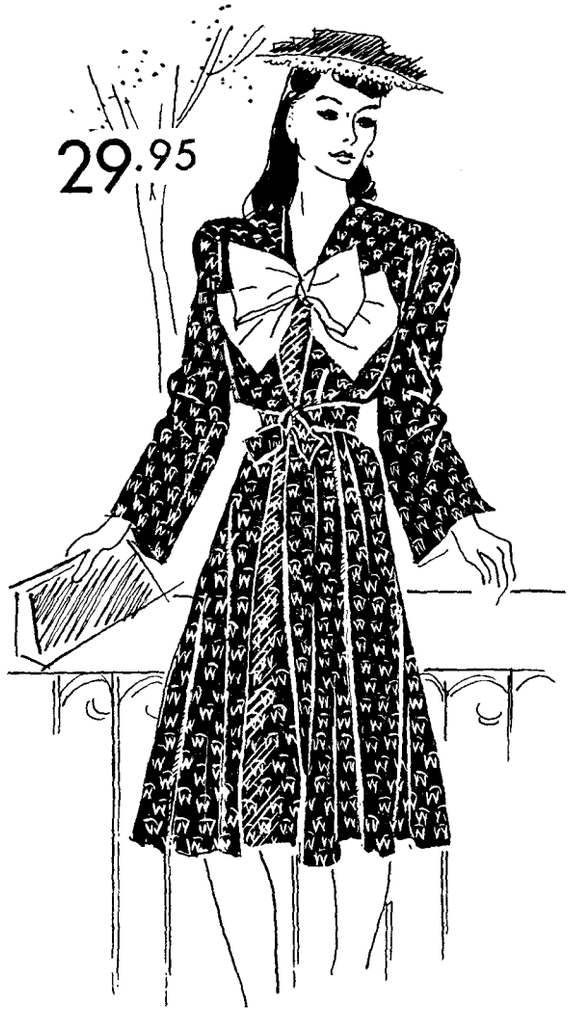

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Topographical features have conditioned the location of settlements and roads in Transjordan. The modern vehicular highway which bisects the fertile plateau from north to south closely parallels Trajan's Roman road, and the same route was used by the Nabataeans. In the iron age, the Jews requested the right to use this highway during the Exodus, and there is no doubt but that it existed at the time of Abraham (bronze age).

Alternating periods of occupation by sedentary agricultural folk—bronze age (23-20 centuries B. C.), iron age (13-6 centuries) and the Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine era—separated by lengthy gaps in which the Bedouins obviously controlled the land, have convinced Dr. Glueck that history repeats itself in the endless conflict between the desert and the town. He believes that Genesis XIV has been confirmed by the destruction of the bronze age settlements about 1900 B. C., possibly by the Hyksos, and he attributes the Jewish-Edomite wars for the possession of the Wadi Arabah to the existence of rich copper ores.

Finally the reader will be interested in his few remarks on prehistoric rock-drawings and the desert monastic community which survived into the Islamic period, and in his grateful appreciation of Arab hospitality.

THEODORE M. AVERY, JR.

WAR

"I Witness." Norman Alley. Funk. $2.75.

SO MANY autobiographical books about adventure in getting the news have been published in recent years that the grades run all the way from A1 to about E5. Certainly a man who has attained prominence in making news stills and newsreels may have his say, and "I Witness" may very well be rated somewhere among the B's.

Norman Alley began his news career as a copy boy on the Chicago *Tribune*. In his early days he watched Ring Lardner and Ben Hecht at work. Ambitious, he saw an opportunity in news photography. Thence it was but a step for an alert youth into the budding newsreel business.

"I Witness" he does, through twenty-two airplane crack-ups, through the Villa expedition, the World War, through horse races and prize fights and floods, through the China War and the *U.S.S. Panay* incident, and down to the fall of Holland, May 10-14, 1940.

Excessive use of clichés and Hollywood journalese will annoy some readers of this book. But Alley's intelligent observations on his extensive travels more than atone for that.

Alley has had an exciting, energetic and useful career to date. His experiences in witnessing the news being made offer entertaining and informative reading.

JASPER OVEL.

BRIEFERS

By the Dim Lamps. Nathan Schachner. Stokes. $2.00.

THE TRADITIONAL southern figures pass through this novel of the Civil War and reconstruction in Louisiana. Perhaps a certain tome, emanating from a point to the east in Georgia, has forever drained novelty from such a plot, but Mr. Schachner has found a new lode on which to mine for his *mise-en-scène*. It provides: Mississippi River plantations before the war, in the guerilla war which flourished on them in the course of the fighting, and in the post-war period of sordid attempts at rehabilitation and high-handed "confiscations" into Yankee hands; and the city of New Orleans itself, with its French, Creole, Negro, commercial and withal glamor-

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ous strains before and after Farragut's arrival, and during the carpetbaggers' rule, when mob uprising and Negro intrigues for a great black empire in Louisiana wrought havoc in the lives of the inhabitants. All this material is fitted bulkily in the form of a historical romance, whose history outshines its romance.

Bright Was Their Destiny. John De Meyer. Funk. $2.50.

THIS realistic, bitter revolt from Boston conservatism deviates from the path of current satires—the white collar journalist gets her blueblood. Surrounded by unhappy neurotics, she suffers when the workers, assorted mongrels, strike against her husband and the other "pedigreed thoroughbreds." This is a refreshingly different portrait of Boston, and a disillusioned one. A shrewd observation of social conditions in New England, it shows the proletariat in a state of seething unrest, and the aristocracy crumbling from three hundred years of inbreeding. The story, a combination of "Kitty Foyle" and "H. M. Pulham, Esquire," is well told, but hampered by the fact that De Meyer never makes the narrator sound convincingly feminine. The masculine reflections of the heroine disconcert the reader.

Thomasheen James. Maurice Walsh. Stokes. $2.50.

THE AUTHOR'S skill as a teller of tales stands out in this amusing series of short stories, which are so well devised that a rather complex Irish dialect is no real barrier. Eire is the locale.

The Hawk's Nest. Hubert Skidmore. Doubleday. $2.50.

A WEST VIRGINIAN version of "The Grapes of Wrath" with the disinherited from East of the Mississippi flocking to the work of excavating a tunnel. The action progresses by spotlighting first one set of indivduals and then another, a more superficial and less unified way of proceeding than Steinbeck's method of following the fortunes of the Joads. Added to the by now familiar saga of expropriation is the tragedy of silicosis, which cripples all these lives. Mr. Skidmore neglects some of the fundamentals of novel writing and yet the ennobling of these ordinary men and women in their fight against despair is moving to witness.

That None Should Die. Frank G. Slaughter. Doubleday. $2.75.

UNPRETENTIOUS and very medical novel inspired by strong if vague humanitarianism. It makes the economic difficulties of young American doctors clear and raises a number of ethical problems which it fails to meet successfully. There is a shadowy suggestion of the perils of socialized medicine, but the author's strong and abiding interest is more scientific medical care.

Sing for a Penny. Clifford Dowdey. Little Brown. $2.50.

AN ABSORBING STORY of Virginia in the 80's and 90's dealing with the hatred and stubbornness of a young industrialist who finally crushed his enemies at the expense of almost everything and everyone around him. A fleeting picture of true love quickly blotted out by the rigors of his ruthless battle for supremacy. Railroads, pulp mills and newspapers, not to mention finance, are the stakes in a game where no holds are barred. The book convincingly shows how a worthy instinct for independence and self-reliance can grow into an inhuman zest for domination. It makes lively reading.

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The Inner Forum

NEXT SUNDAY (May 18) has been designated as Bible Sunday by most of the bishops and archbishops of the United States. The usual procedure has been to set up diocesan New Testament committees which in turn will work with local parish committees. The object of the observance is "to place a revised New Testament in every Catholic home." The project has been sponsored by the Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The Confraternity will handle much of the distribution.

In the diocese of Denver, Col., for instance, the campaign extends from May 18 to June 1, and Bishop Vehr has written his clergy suggesting sermons on the new Bible, May 18, the formation of committees and the distribution of formal orders blanks. All pastors and chaplains in the archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, will speak on the topic of this new edition on Bible Sunday. The diocese of Albany, N. Y., will display posters in church vestibules, distribute preliminary descriptive literature and order envelopes. Parish committee members will canvass their fellow-parishioners in their homes.

St. Bonaventure College of Alleghany, N. Y., has secured permission of the postal authorities to issue a special Bible cachet, an open book with the inscription, "The message of the Father to the brotherhood of man." The design will also include a list of some of the Franciscan "landmarks" in biblical studies. This cancellation cachet is available at the St. Bonaventure College Library.

"The revised New Testament, the first English revision in almost two centuries, representing the utmost in scholastic achievement, will be commemorated on Biblical Sunday, when most of the bishops of the country will signalize the occasion with a pastoral letter on the New Testament and Sacred Scriptures to be read in the Catholic churches of their diocese at every Mass. . . . Biblical Sunday is sponsored by the American hierarchy and its establishment has been praised by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. . . . For over a period of five years a large group of Catholic biblical scholars and theologians . . . have been working on this new English version. . . . The new text is a revision of the Challoner-Rheims version based on the Latin vulgate, with the end in view of rendering the New Testament in highly simplified and modernized language."

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